

HARRISBURG NEWS (PA)  
28 September 1984

## *Ex-agent: Warnings impossible* **Don't pin attacks on CIA, veteran says**

By MARK ROLLENHAGEN  
Staff Writer

The Central Intelligence Agency suffers from a morale problem that began in the mid-1970s, but the agency can't be blamed for failing to prevent last week's suicide bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut, a former CIA officer said last night.

David Atlee Phillips, a 25-year CIA veteran who retired in 1975, spoke to the Executives Club of Central Pennsylvania at the Sheraton Harrisburg-West in Fairview Twp.

In an interview before his speech, Phillips said President Reagan's criticism of the lack of presidential support for U.S. intelligence activities from prior administrations "didn't directly address the problem."

The former chief of Latin American and Caribbean operations for the CIA's Operations Directorate said U.S. intelligence agents can do little about specific terrorist attacks.

Even if an undercover agent is able to penetrate a terrorist group, he'll rarely be able to contact U.S. officials before a terroristic action, Phillips said. Terrorists groups keep all members who know about an upcoming bombing or kidnapping under strict security, he said.

"What can be expected of in-

telligence agents is that they can report on the political climate and be able to say when precautions should be taken," Phillips said.

He said terrorist attacks such as last week's in Beirut, Lebanon, can only be stopped "when the U.S. ambassador learns to get out of his car outside the embassy compound and walk in."

"No cars should be allowed within the compound," Phillips said.

He said policy decisions, including CIA budget and staff cuts, under both the Ford and Carter administrations, hurt U.S. intelligence efforts.

"But the main thing is not what Carter or Ford did, but the [congressional] investigations of 1975," Phillips said. "Suddenly it became fashionable to have no secrets. There weren't any covert activities anymore — you could read about them in the Washington Post."

After retiring from the CIA, Phillips, 61, founded a non-partisan group of retired intelligence officers. He declined to say whether he thought the CIA was improving under Reagan, except to say, "Mr. Reagan has made more money available for intelligence operations," and the morale among CIA agents is improving.



**David Atlee Phillips**  
25-year CIA veteran

In his speech to the group of executives, Phillips said that a "great debate erupted regarding U.S. intelligence activities," and "our best agents started telling us, 'thanks, but no thanks.'"

The open national debate and the establishment of the magazine Counterspy by former-CIA agent Phillip Agee scared many foreigners away from working with the CIA, Phillips said. The magazine published the names — "quite accurately" — of CIA station chiefs in foreign countries, he said.

Phillips said he left the CIA because, when he told his 15-year-old daughter that he worked for the CIA, she said, "That's dirty."

In previous years, he said, when he had told his older children that he worked for the CIA, they were proud.